

## **Description of Typical School Field Trips to the Estuary**

Visits can last between 1 1/2 hours and 3 hours, depending on time available.

Divide children into three groups. Review field manners. Each group then rotates through three activities, such as:

### **I. Plant Observation**

Materials:

Plant observation sheets

Plant cards

Hand lenses (optional)

Pencils and clipboards

Activity:

Choose a habitat, such as uplands (native plant garden), salt marsh, or riparian.

Talk about the differences among habitats (how plants are different in each area and how they've adapted to dry conditions, salty soil, etc.).

Have students work in pairs. Each group chooses a plant and fills out the worksheets using observations from the plant.

Suggestions for Multiple Visits:

Choose another habitat in which to observe plants.

### **II. Bird Observation**

Materials:

Bird observation sheets and/or bird checklist

Birds at the estuary

Bird cards (optional)

Binoculars (available at the visitor center)

Pencils and clipboards

Activity:

Take group to the tidal ponds, located on the McCoy Trail.

Observe the tide and other conditions. Talk about how this affects the species of birds observed (mud feeders such as sandpipers, willets, dowitchers, long-billed curlews, etc. are more evident at low tide; fishers and swimmers such as ducks, egrets, herons, kingfishers, ospreys, etc. are more evident at high tide).

Have students observe the birds and their behavior, recording answers on the worksheets.

Suggestions for Multiple Visits:

Use different worksheets, e.g. feeding styles, bird behavior, bird checklist.

### **III. Visitor Center Activities**

Materials:

None

Activities:

View *Timeless River* video (20 min.)

Visit exhibits

Watershed Game (if time):

Explain the significance of the watershed map and watersheds (see materials packet for teacher background).

Place students at various points on the map (mountains, cities, reservoirs, etc.).

Tell students they are drops of rainwater and ask them to trace their paths to the Estuary, noticing where they pass through (dams, crossing the border, etc.).

Ask students where they passed. Discuss what it would mean if they were drops of pollution (oil, chemicals, etc.) instead of water.

Suggestions for Multiple Visits:

Natural Scavenger Hunt (included in Field Trip Materials)

#### **IV. Walk to the River Mouth**

On subsequent visits to the Estuary, an observational walk to the mouth of the Tijuana River is suggested. The group can either walk from the south end of Seacoast Drive along the beach to the river, or may take the trail from 5th and Iris Streets. The distance is about the same; the walk can last from 1-3 hours.